

STATE OF THE CITY – Presented 2-2-05

I have decided to begin my remarks with some of the exact words I used last year. First of all, I doubt if anyone here remembers what I said anyway. And secondly, I believe that it behooves us to be reminded of some of these things often, perhaps even more than annually.

A year ago a Deseret News reporter poked fun at the series of speeches that occur every year about this time. He wrote that we are exposed to “the State of the Union”, the “State of the State”, the “State of the County” and on and on.

He went on . . . I’m paraphrasing . . . what’s next? The state of the neighborhood? The state of the block? The state of the sidewalk?

He didn’t mention any state of the city messages given by most mayors.

This year, there were newspaper articles discussing the decision of our new governor to deliver his “State of the State” outside of the Wasatch Front. There were even references to the constitutional requirement of where his speech should be given and who it should be addressed to.

As I read these articles – last year and this year – I did some thinking. There is no ordinance or policy that requires me to deliver a state of the city address. There is no statute or law that says it should be delivered to the Council, but the public can listen OR vice verse. I do this for only one reason. That is because I think that about once a year it is really good for us to think about the big picture and not about the “nitty gritty” of a single agenda item or budget issue or policy direction.

I also got to thinking that even though this room is not filled to overflowing, and even though there are no cameras running or radio station mikes attached to the podium, it seems that our friends and neighbors in Taylorsville, in some ways, have a more keen interest in the state of Taylorsville than they do in some of the larger political subdivisions.

When I say that I do not insinuate that there are many of our residents who have a specific, detailed interest in each individual policy, ordinance, or agenda. I am confident, however, that there are matters

which affect them every day, and they have elected us to respond to those issues. The majority of issues that are reported to the City offices are issues that affect individual neighborhoods and sometimes even individual houses:

We hear about a street light that is out.

We hear about a sidewalk that is broken or one that has been lifted by the roots of a tree.

We hear about a place where there is no sidewalk.

We hear that deputies are enforcing speed limits -- too much

We hear that deputies are enforcing speed limits – not enough

We hear about vandalism or graffiti.

We hear about suspected drug houses.

AND we respond.

The times when this room is filled to overflowing, are the times when neighbors are concerned about something – usually a land use matter – that they think will change their quality of life or the way they enjoy their property.

We deal with matters that affect people every day and right away. When it snows, the people know immediately if our plows aren't out. If a traffic signal is malfunctioning, we hear about it within minutes.

The decisions made by President Bush and by Congress usually take longer to affect our local community than the decisions made by the Mayor and the City Council.

When we became a city, a citizen survey was conducted and the results were compiled for our use as we began to plan and prioritize. Public safety was the highest priority, as defined by our residents and businesses. They want to know that their property and their own person will be as safe as possible in the event of fire, crime, traffic accidents, etc. They want to know that our first responders are well trained, well equipped, and adequate to our needs.

During the past year those concerns have not changed, but the manner in which we provide those services is changing. For 7 months the U.F.A. has been operative. This is a great thing. It has a stabilizing effect on

our ability to provide fire protection services with Taylorsville. Policy decisions and budget decisions are made by a 9-member board, and Taylorsville has a vote in those decisions, which was never the case under the contracting scenario.

Now there is discussion of creating a Police Authority, and many leaders – elected and appointed officials, as well as front-line law enforcement personnel are getting behind the idea to see it come to fruition. Taylorsville will again be in the forefront of this initiative, because of the positive effect it will have on public safety.

Homeland security has also become a greater priority in recent years, because of Sept. 11, 2001. Cities are placing more emphasis on emergency preparedness and pro-active ways to avoid terrorist intrusion to their buildings, and these needs are reflected in our budget and our planning.

Using the example of public safety – it is plain to see that some things do not change – such as the constituents’ concern for public safety. It is also plain to see that some things do change – such as the manner in which the concerns are addressed. During 2005, the manner in which we address law enforcement is changing – largely because we have understood the need to add stability to the service – again knowing that it is important to the community.

That original survey had “parks and open space” as the issue that was next on the mind of the constituents, after public safety. One thing that has changed in 2004 is that we have an additional City park – Millrace Park and an additional Parkway trailhead. One thing that has not changed, is that we continue to hear from people that they desire more parks and recreational facilities.

One thing that has changed in 2004 is that we now have an in-house Economic Development Department. One thing that has not changed is that we understand the critical need for economic development and the importance of finding ways to upgrade our business district to make it inviting to tenants and to customers.

One thing that has changed in 2004 is that we added several new employees. One thing that has not changed is that we have many long-

term employees who continue to do excellent work, making us – the elected officials – look good. My sincere personal appreciation is expressed to them. For the record, we have two employees who have been with Taylorsville for 8.5 years. We have one who has been here for 7.5 years. We have one who has been here for 7 years – although she did it in two shifts.

If I don't consider positions that have been authorized in the last year, such as the Police Chief, economic development, public works inspector, and other new positions, the average tenure of a Taylorsville employee is 4 years. This longevity – in combination with their individual professionalism and expertise, makes for a staff on which we rely and of which we are very proud. To them I say, thank you very much and keep up the good work! We have a great Taylorsville team !

One thing changed in 2004 is that we have appointed numerous new volunteers to various boards, committees, and commissions. One thing that has not changed is that we have hundreds of volunteers who work many hours each week, behind the scenes and with little thanks, to make this City better and to make the jobs of the elected officials easier.

One thing that changed is that we now have a museum. One thing that has not changed is that we have zealous, energetic volunteers who will continue to add to and improve the good ideas for projects and programs to be accomplished in the future.

One thing that changed is we had 2 new council members during 2004. One thing that has not changed is that we continue to be served by people who are willing to sacrifice personal time and personal talents to make a difference in their city. For those who think this service is about fame and fortune, they need to dig a little deeper. They would find that those who serve in elected office pay a personal price and certainly a greater price is paid by their families and loved ones. To those who support us in our service – we love you, we thank you, we appreciate you.

One thing that has changed is that Ken Cook is not here to remind me to keep this short. One thing that has not changed is that I understand that you did not come here to listen longer than is needful – so I have again brought you a homework assignment. It is not possible, in this

setting, to tell you everything that made 2004 great, so I have brought you the traditional list of achievements for the previous year. Let me issue a disclaimer about this list – I asked each employee to submit a list. Those lists were compiled into one great master list. If you think of an accomplishment that is not mentioned, that doesn't mean that it is less meaningful than those you have before you. It simply means that no one thought of it.

Another year – 2004 – has come and gone. We look forward to 2005, knowing that we have challenges and that the nature of those challenges is changing. Taylorsville is at a crossroads. We no longer have the luxury that came with being a new City. The first few years our budgets were lean because we had almost no operating expense. No parks to water, no buildings to heat, no equipment to maintain, and no flags to rotate, and no belongings to insure. With each new capital project, we accept a lifetime of expenditures to keep it clean, functioning, and useful – and the result is fewer dollars for future projects.

Our challenge is to carefully understand the wants and needs of our community – our entire community, including those who are less vocal – and to carefully prioritize the projects and programs yet to come.

Our challenge is to provide the leadership, the dialogue and the decisiveness which is expected of us.

Our challenge is to facilitate excellent relationships with state and county agencies, neighboring cities, and most of all, with our constituents.

These are challenges that are not necessarily specific to 2005, but are ongoing challenges which we will face and which will be faced by our successors in future years.

Our specific, immediate challenge is to offer to develop and initiate projects and programs in 2005 that will set Taylorsville on the path that will make the jobs of all those future leaders easier, not more difficult.

Our specific, immediate challenge is to maintain the organizational strength and the fiscal strength for which Taylorsville is known and for which it has been known for 8 ½ years.

Our specific, immediate challenge is to work together, to focus on common goals and resolve, with respect and civility, any matters on which we see things differently. Our specific, immediate challenge is to make Taylorsville greater in 2005 than it was in 2004. We know this is possible, because in 2004 we made it greater than it was in 2003.